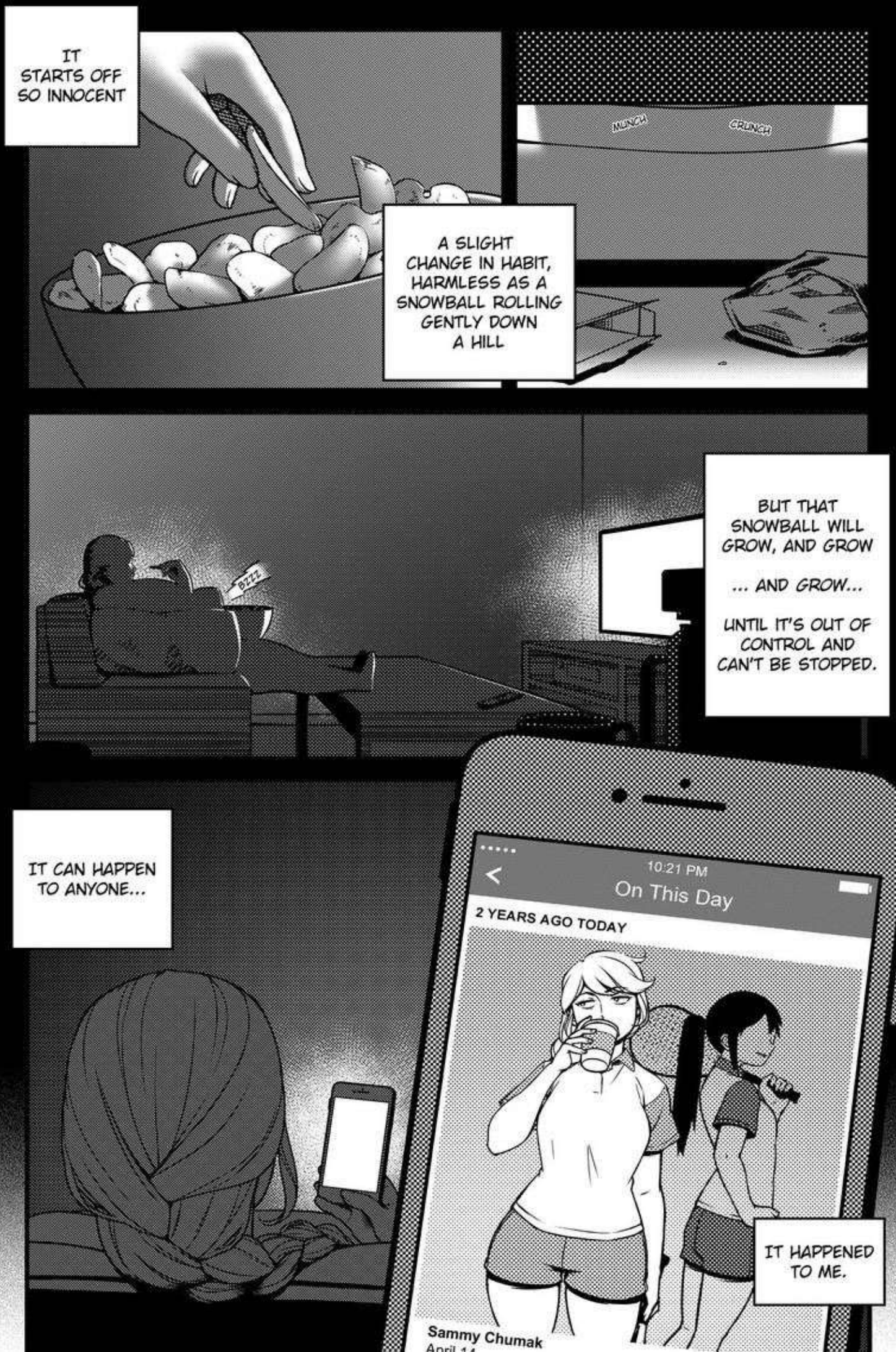
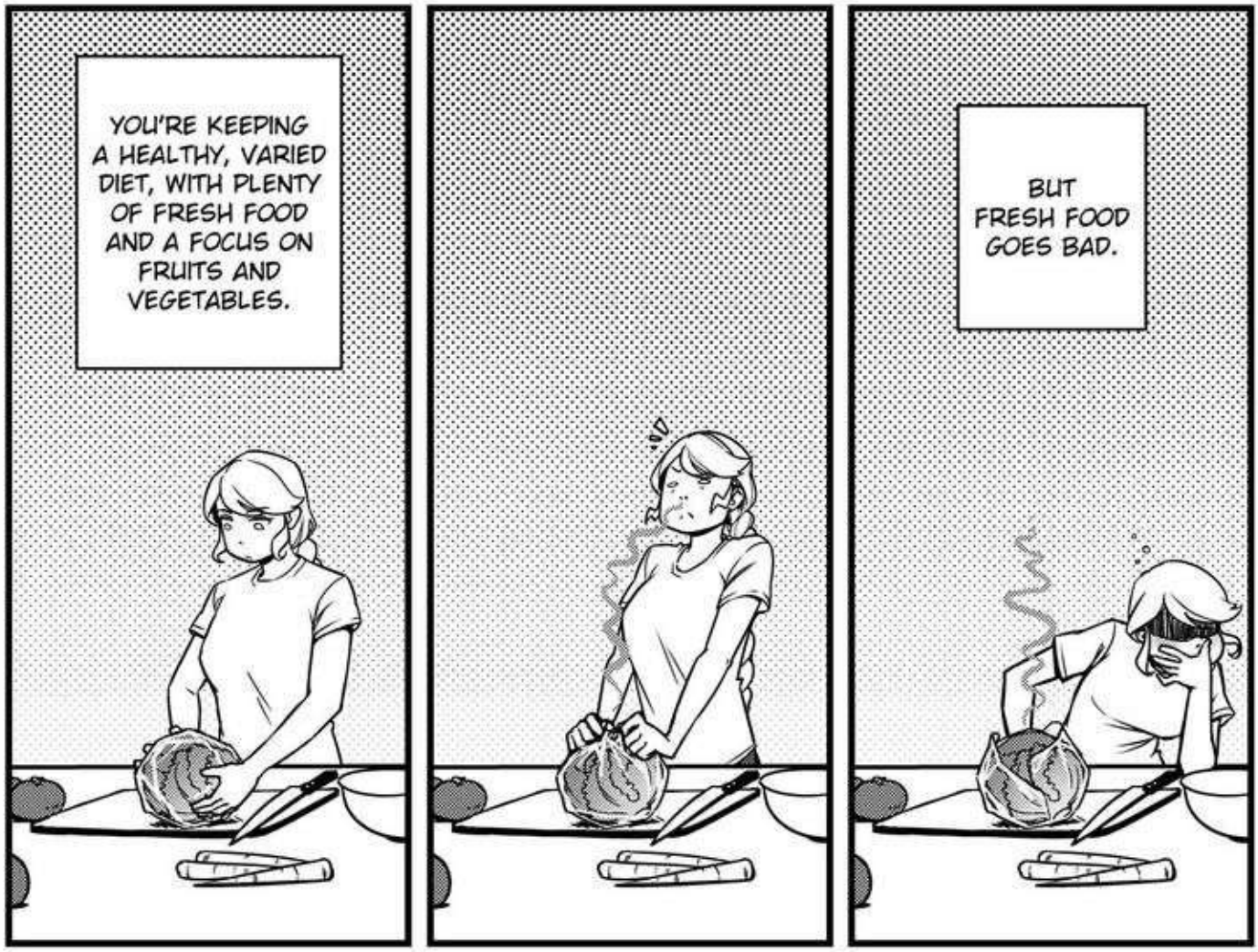
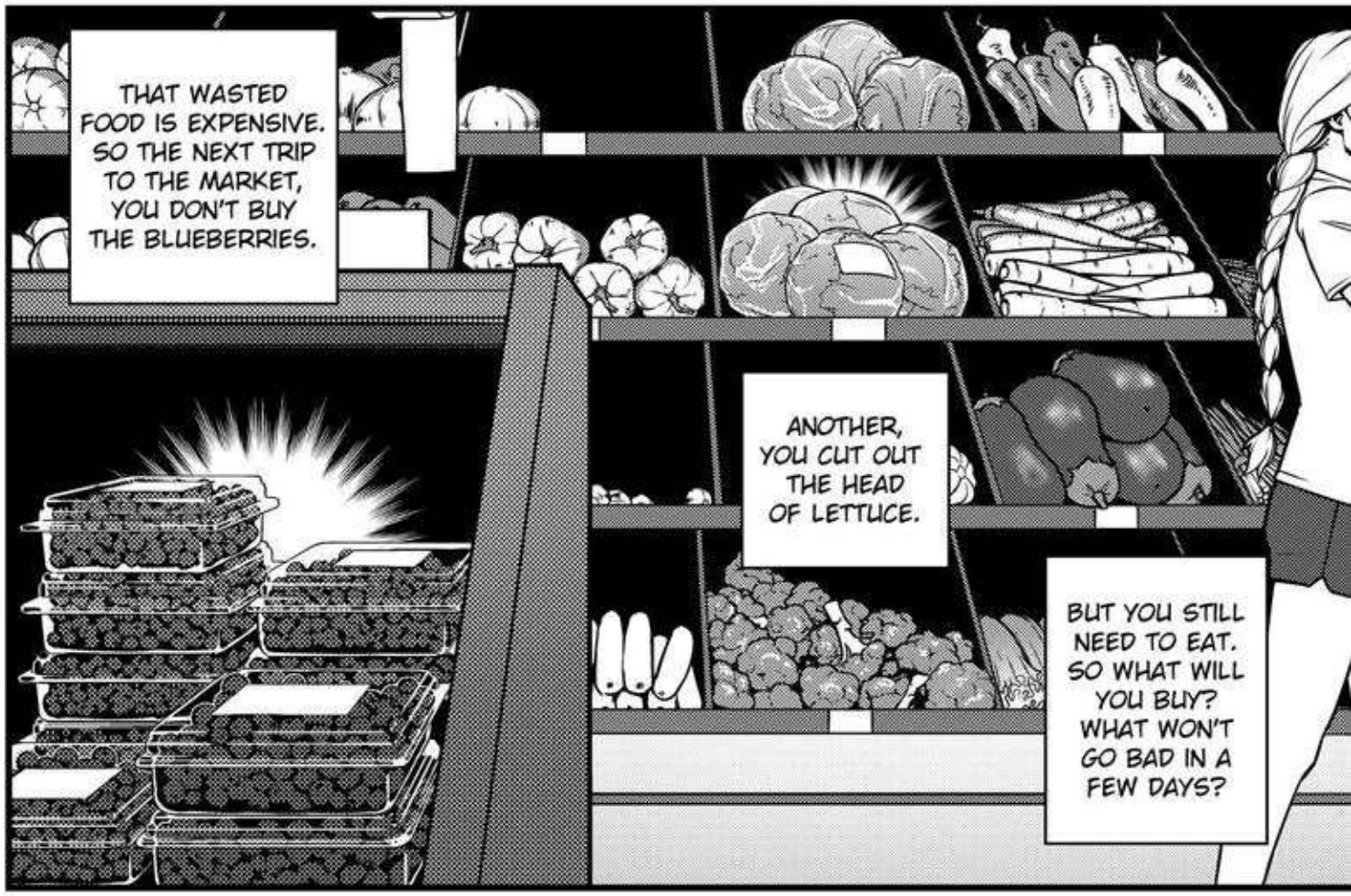
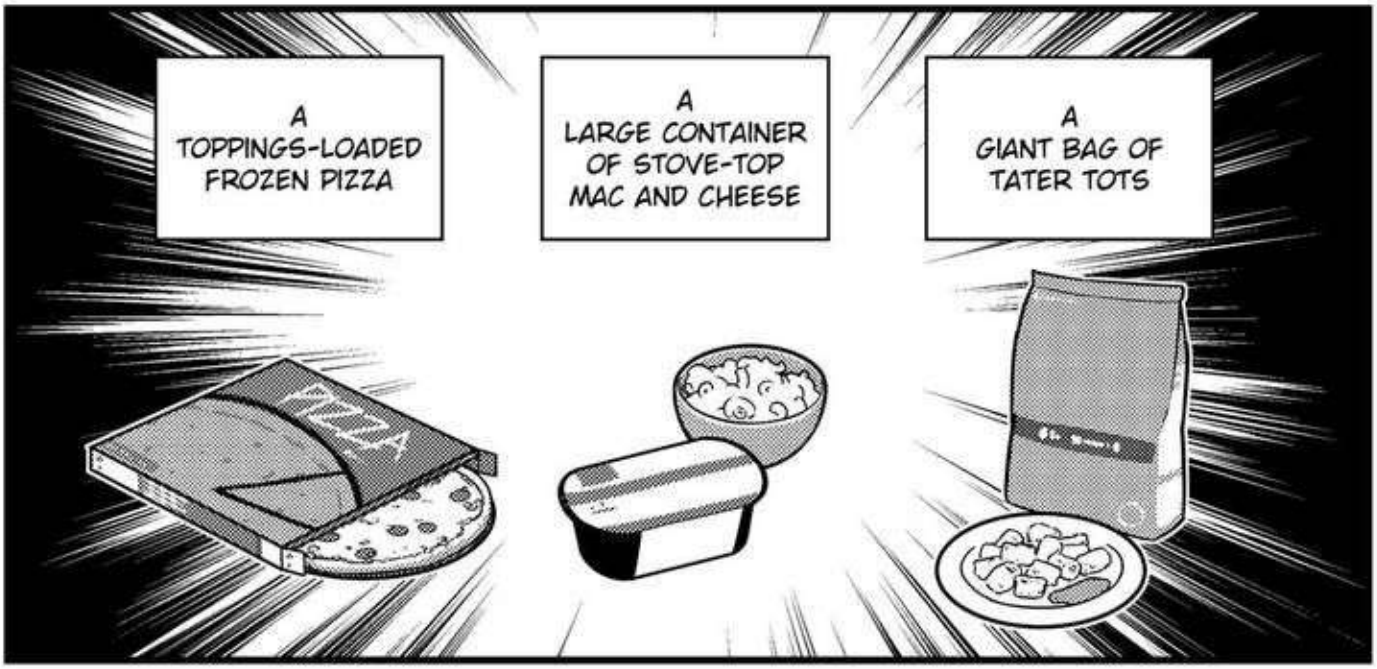
STORY AND ARTWORK BY BETTER WITH SALT

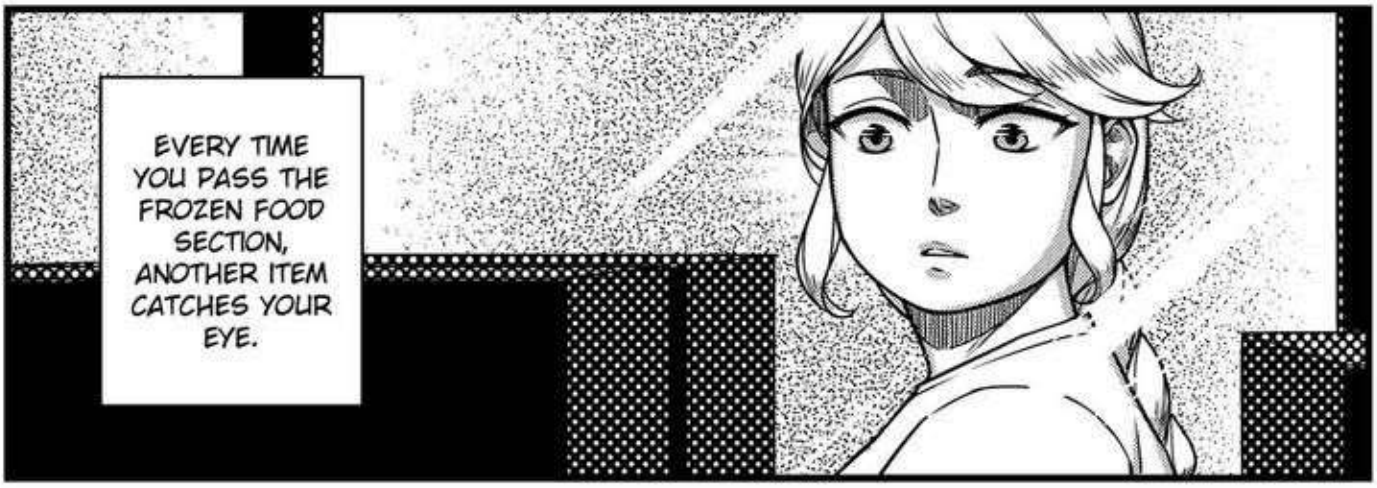

IT STARTS OFF SO INNOCENT
MUNCH
CRUNCH
A SLIGHT CHANGE IN HABIT, HARMLESS AS A SNOWBALL ROLLING GENTLY DOWN A HILL
BUT THAT SNOWBALL WILL GROW, AND GROW
... AND GROW...
UNTIL IT'S OUT OF CONTROL AND CAN'T BE STOPPED.
BZZZ
IT CAN HAPPEN TO ANYONE...
10:21 PM
On This Day
2 YEARS AGO TODAY
IT HAPPENED TO ME.
Sammy Chumak
April 14

A COOKIE AFTER LUNCH AND DINNER
A MOUTHFUL OF SHREDDED CHEESE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.
AT THE BEGINNING, IT'S EASY TO TELL YOURSELF IT'S FINE.
YOU'RE ACTIVE, SO YOU'LL BURN THOSE CALORIES EASILY, RIGHT?
YOU'RE STILL BEING RESPONSIBLE.


YOU'RE KEEPING A HEALTHY, VARIED DIET, WITH PLENTY OF FRESH FOOD AND A FOCUS ON FRUITS AND VEGETABLES.
BUT FRESH FOOD GOES BAD.

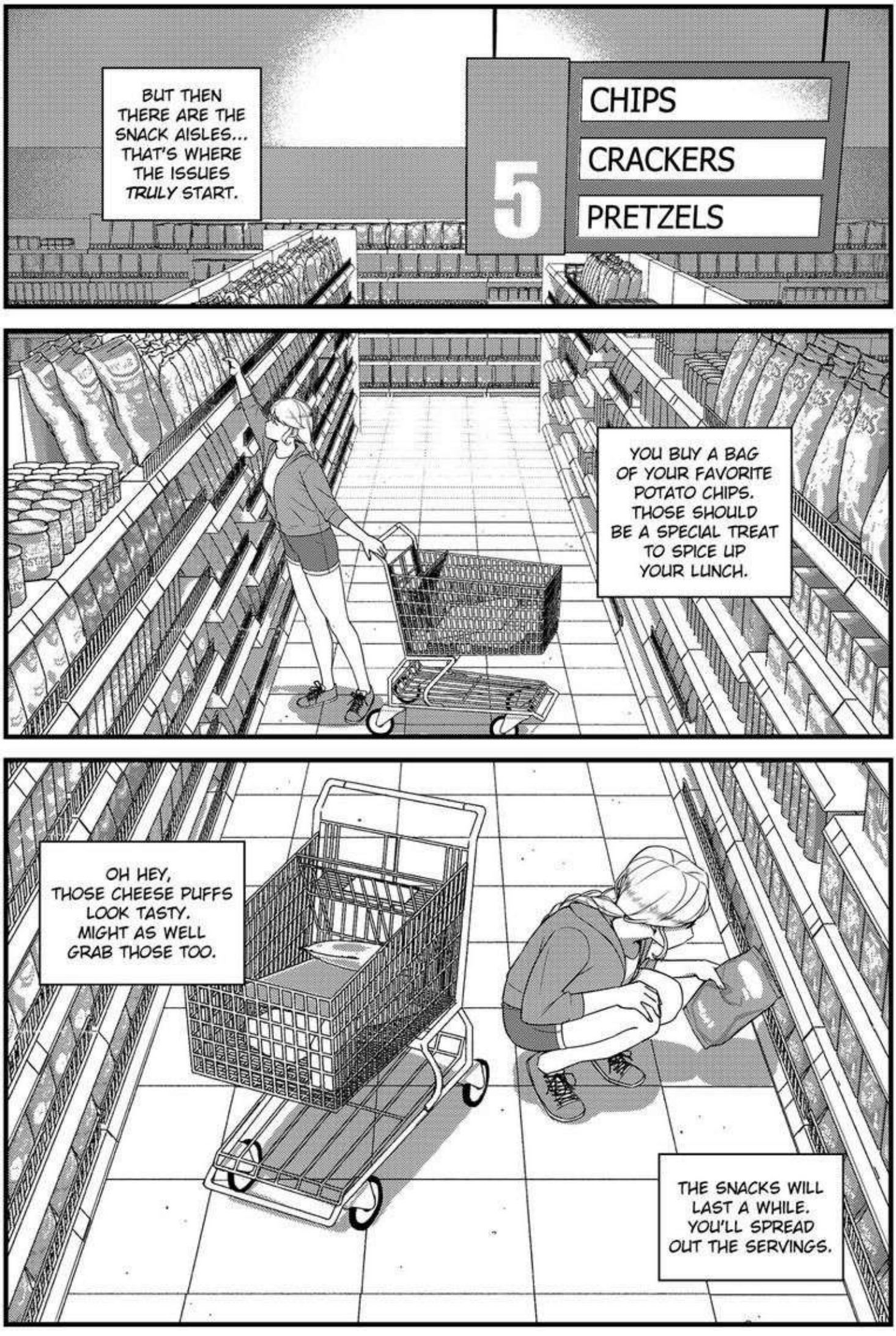

THAT WASTED FOOD IS EXPENSIVE. SO THE NEXT TRIP TO THE MARKET, YOU DON'T BUY THE BLUEBERRIES.
ANOTHER, YOU CUT OUT THE HEAD OF LETTUCE.
BUT YOU STILL NEED TO EAT. SO WHAT WILL YOU BUY? WHAT WON'T GO BAD IN A FEW DAYS?

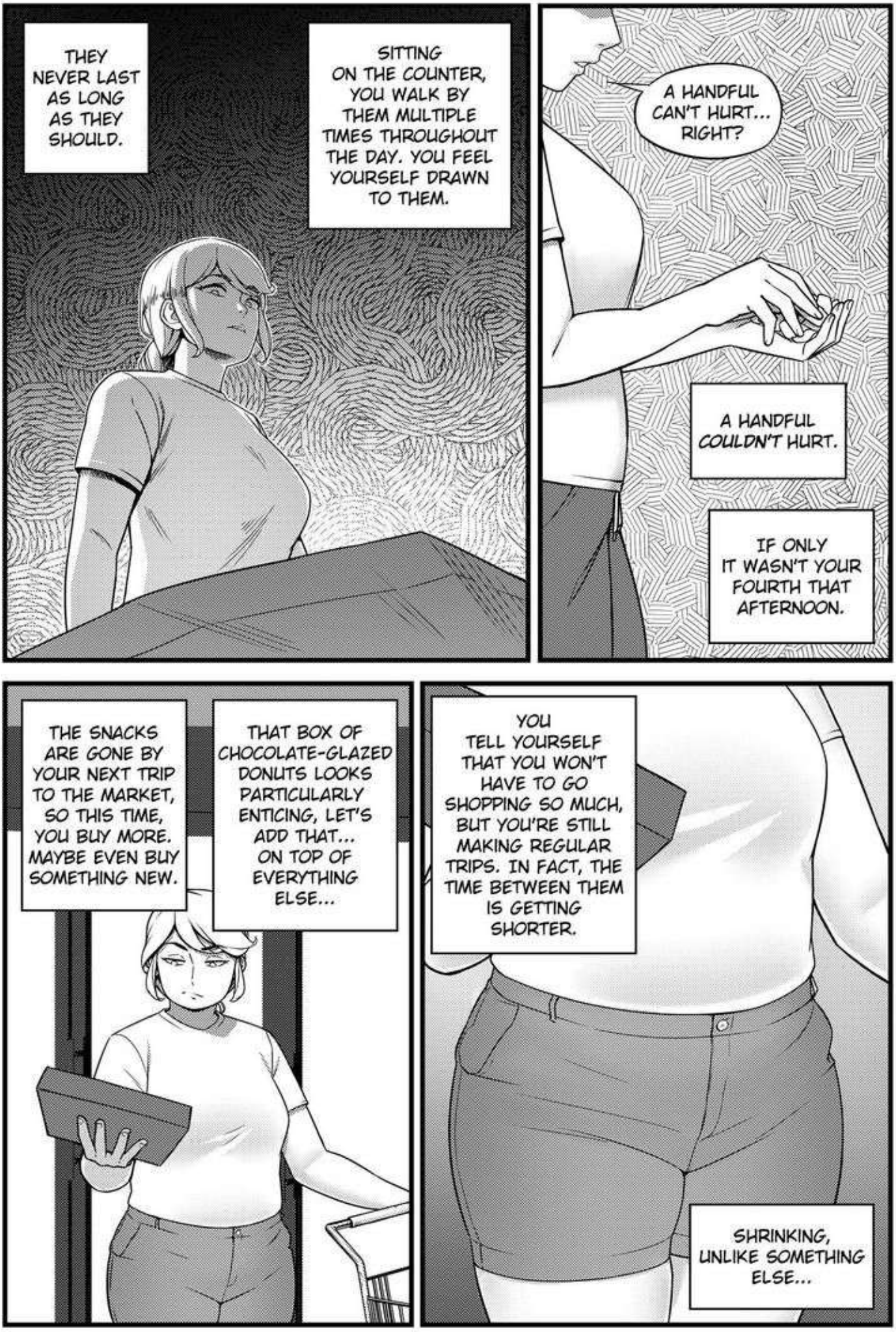

A TOPPINGS-LOADED FROZEN PIZZA
A LARGE CONTAINER OF STOVE-TOP MAC AND CHEESE
A GIANT BAG OF TATER TOTS
PIZZA


EVERY TIME YOU PASS THE FROZEN FOOD SECTION, ANOTHER ITEM CATCHES YOUR EYE.

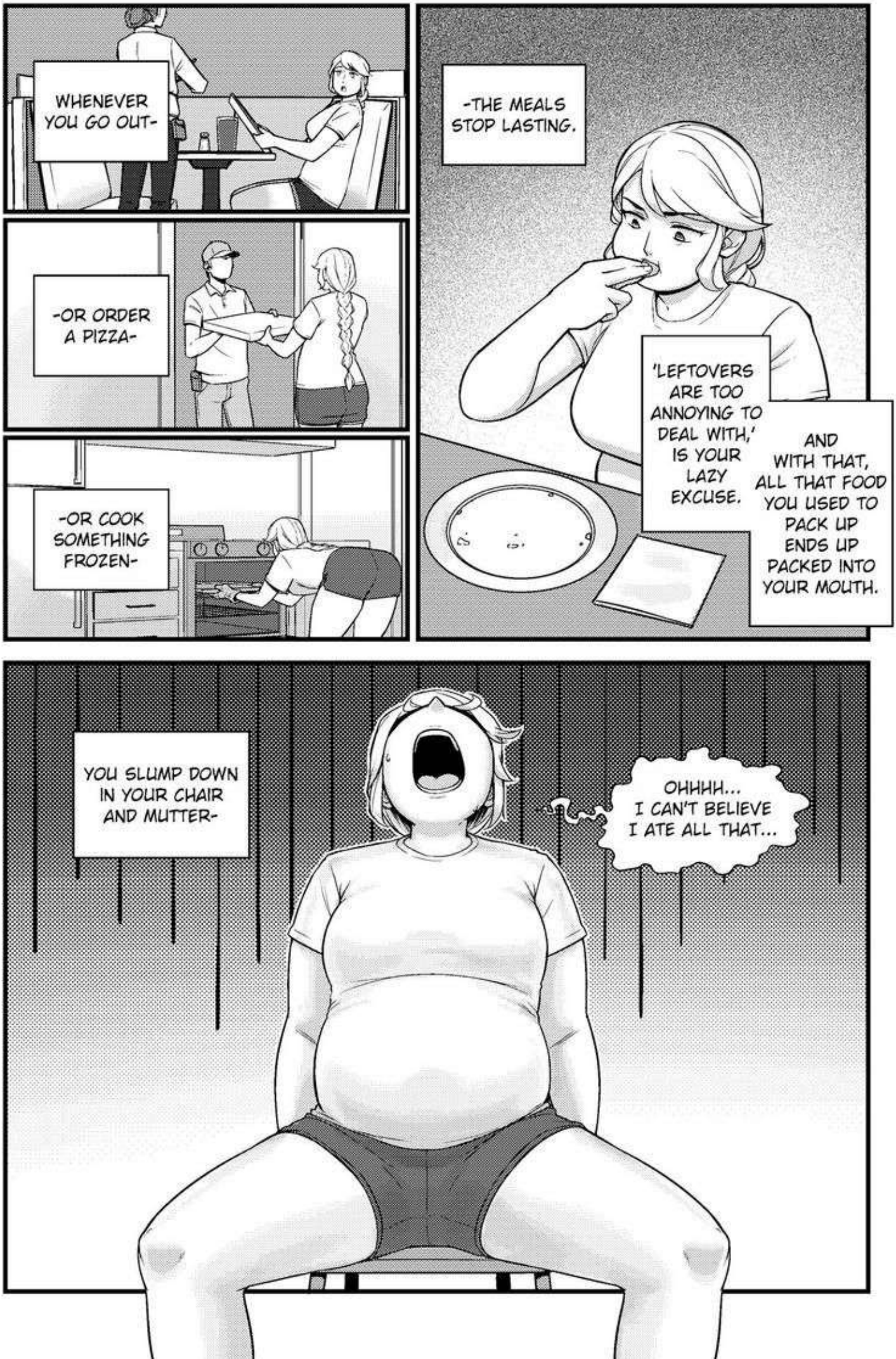
THERE'S SO MUCH VARIETY, AND YOU WANT TO TRY EVERYTHING IT HAS TO OFFER.
IT'S FINE THOUGH, YOU LIMIT YOURSELF TO ONE ITEM PER TRIP TO THE STORE.

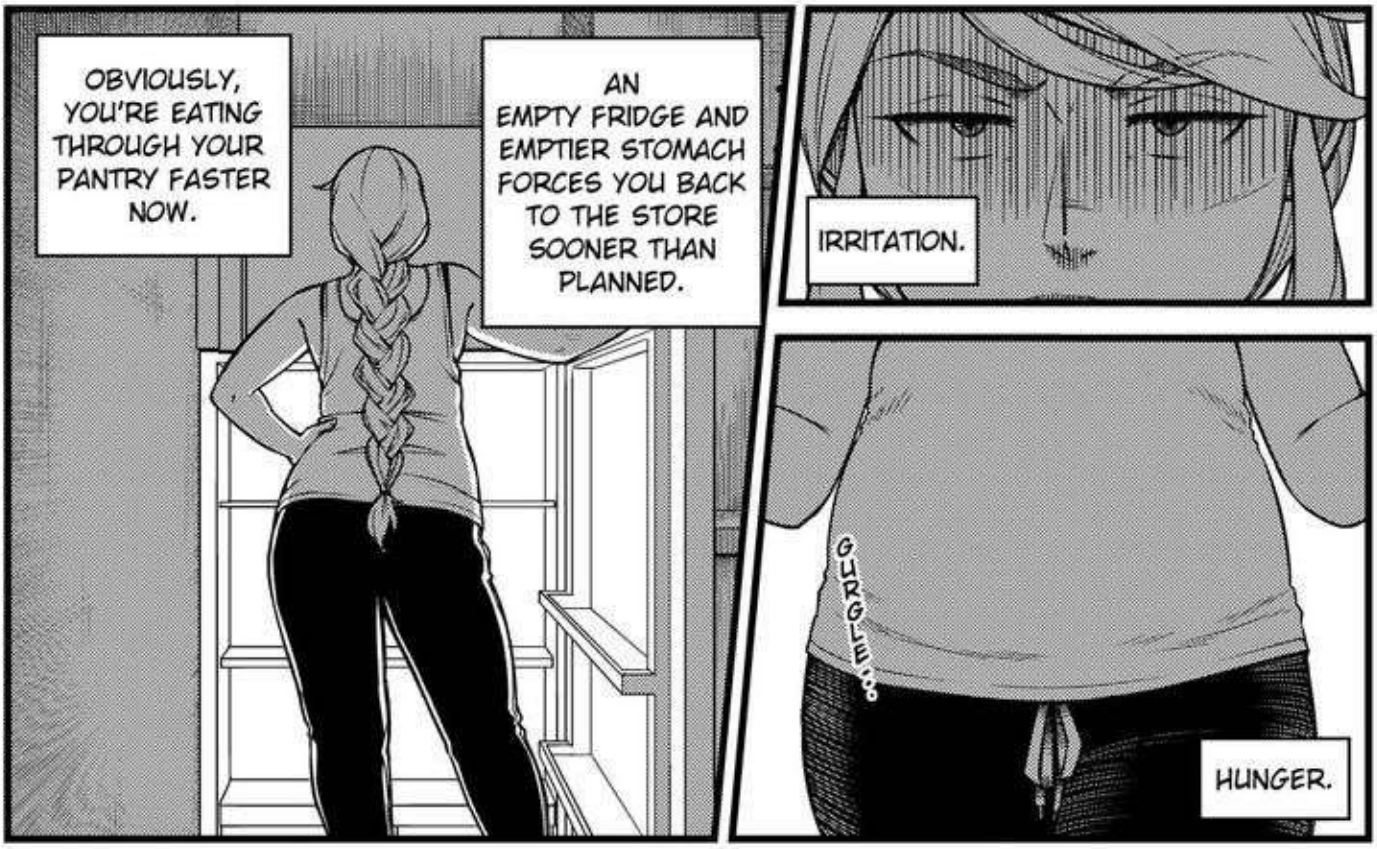
YOU PLAN TO KEEP THE PORTIONS SMALL. THAT PIZZA WILL LAST TWO, MAYBE EVEN THREE MEALS.

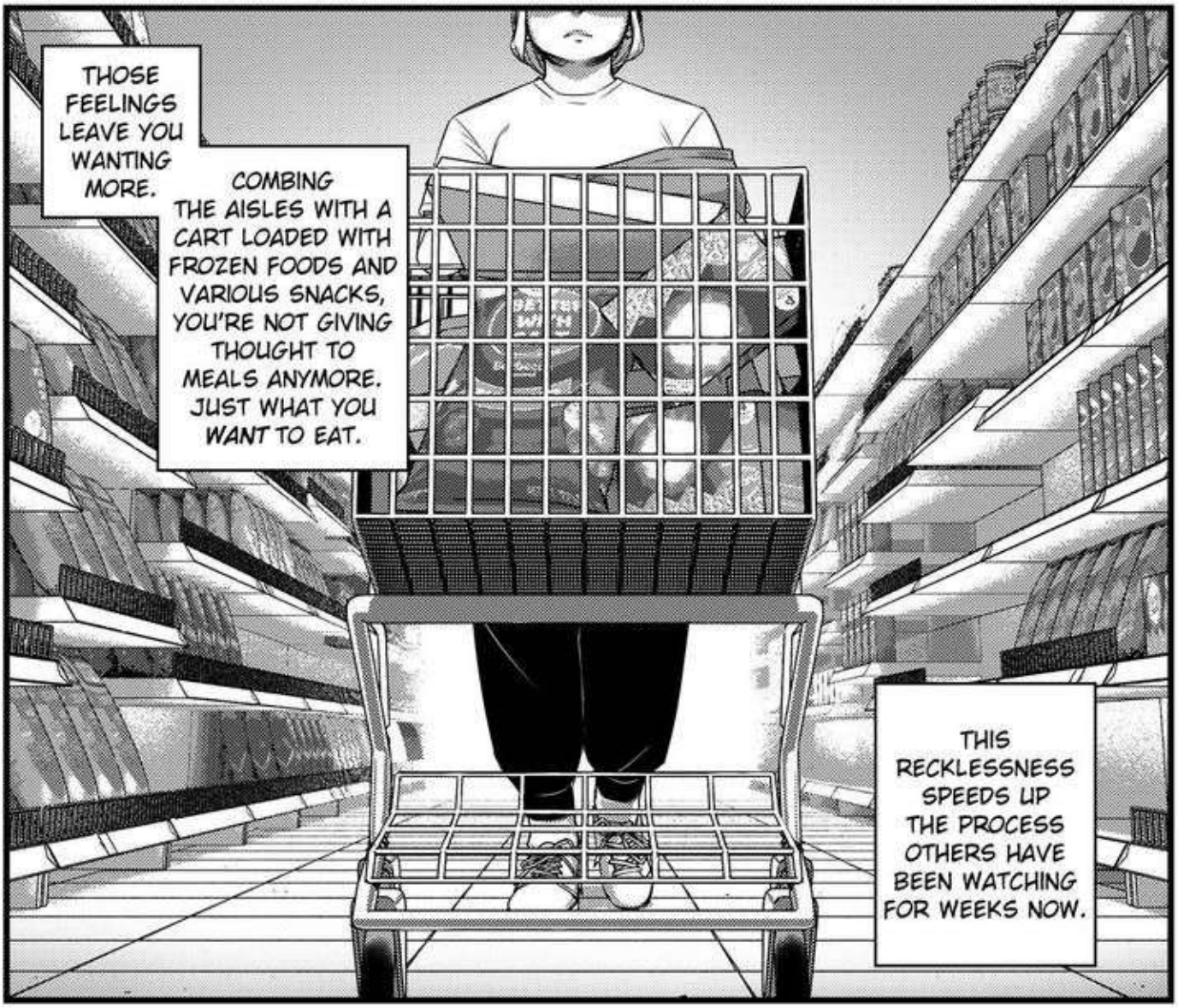

BUT THEN THERE ARE THE SNACK AISLES... THAT'S WHERE THE ISSUES *TRULY* START.
5
CHIPS
CRACKERS
PRETZELS
YOU BUY A BAG OF YOUR FAVORITE POTATO CHIPS. THOSE SHOULD BE A SPECIAL TREAT TO SPICE UP YOUR LUNCH.
OH HEY, THOSE CHEESE PUFFS LOOK TASTY. MIGHT AS WELL GRAB THOSE TOO.
THE SNACKS WILL LAST A WHILE. YOU'LL SPREAD OUT THE SERVINGS.

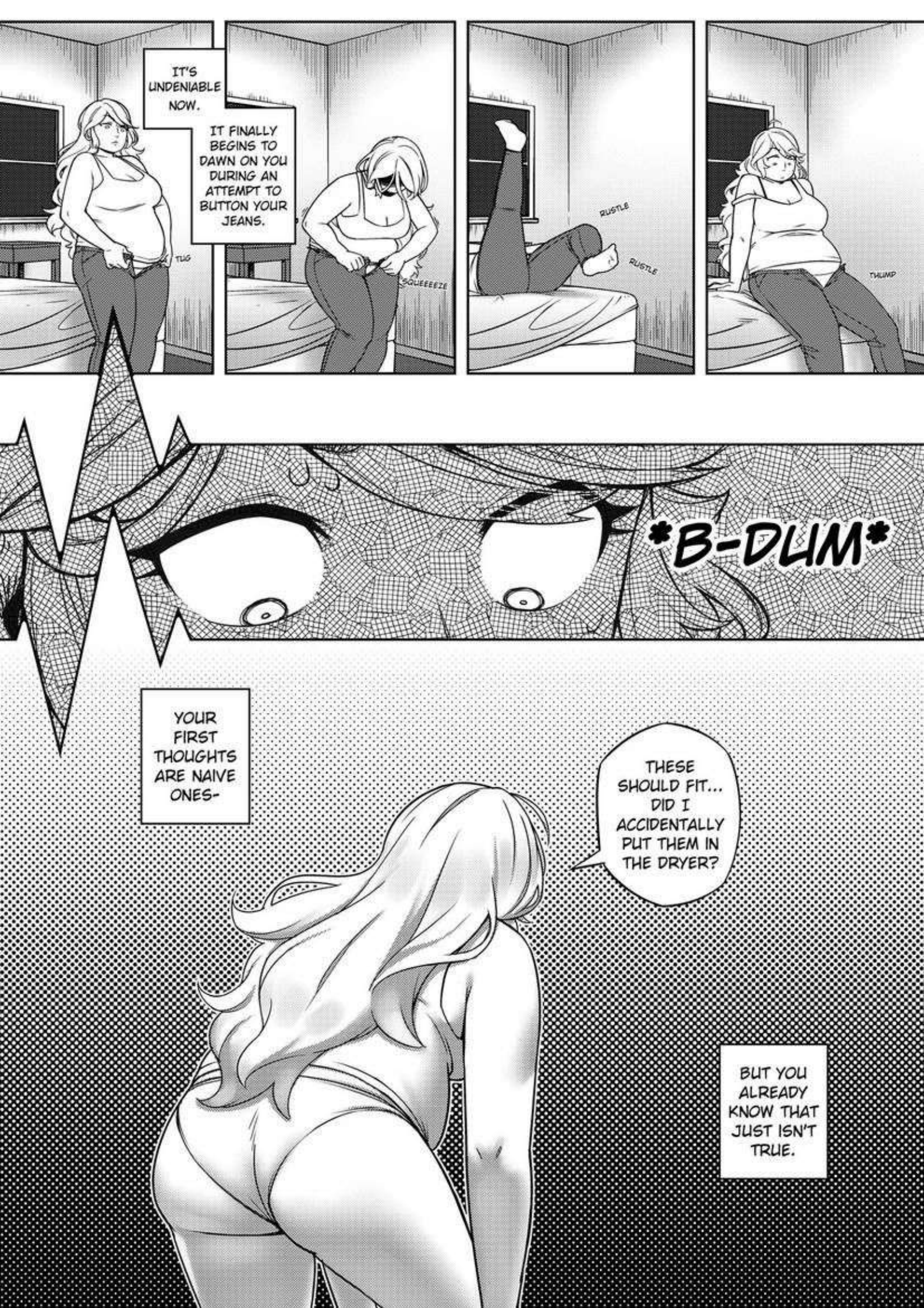

THEY NEVER LAST AS LONG AS THEY SHOULD.
SITTING ON THE COUNTER, YOU WALK BY THEM MULTIPLE TIMES THROUGHOUT THE DAY. YOU FEEL YOURSELF DRAWN TO THEM.
A HANDFUL CAN'T HURT... RIGHT?
A HANDFUL COULDN'T HURT.
IF ONLY IT WASN'T YOUR FOURTH THAT AFTERNOON.
THE SNACKS ARE GONE BY YOUR NEXT TRIP TO THE MARKET, SO THIS TIME, YOU BUY MORE. MAYBE EVEN BUY SOMETHING NEW.
THAT BOX OF CHOCOLATE-GLAZED DONUTS LOOKS PARTICULARLY ENTICING, LET'S ADD THAT... ON TOP OF EVERYTHING ELSE...
YOU TELL YOURSELF THAT YOU WON'T HAVE TO GO SHOPPING SO MUCH, BUT YOU'RE STILL MAKING REGULAR TRIPS. IN FACT, THE TIME BETWEEN THEM IS GETTING SHORTER.
SHRINKING, UNLIKE SOMETHING ELSE...

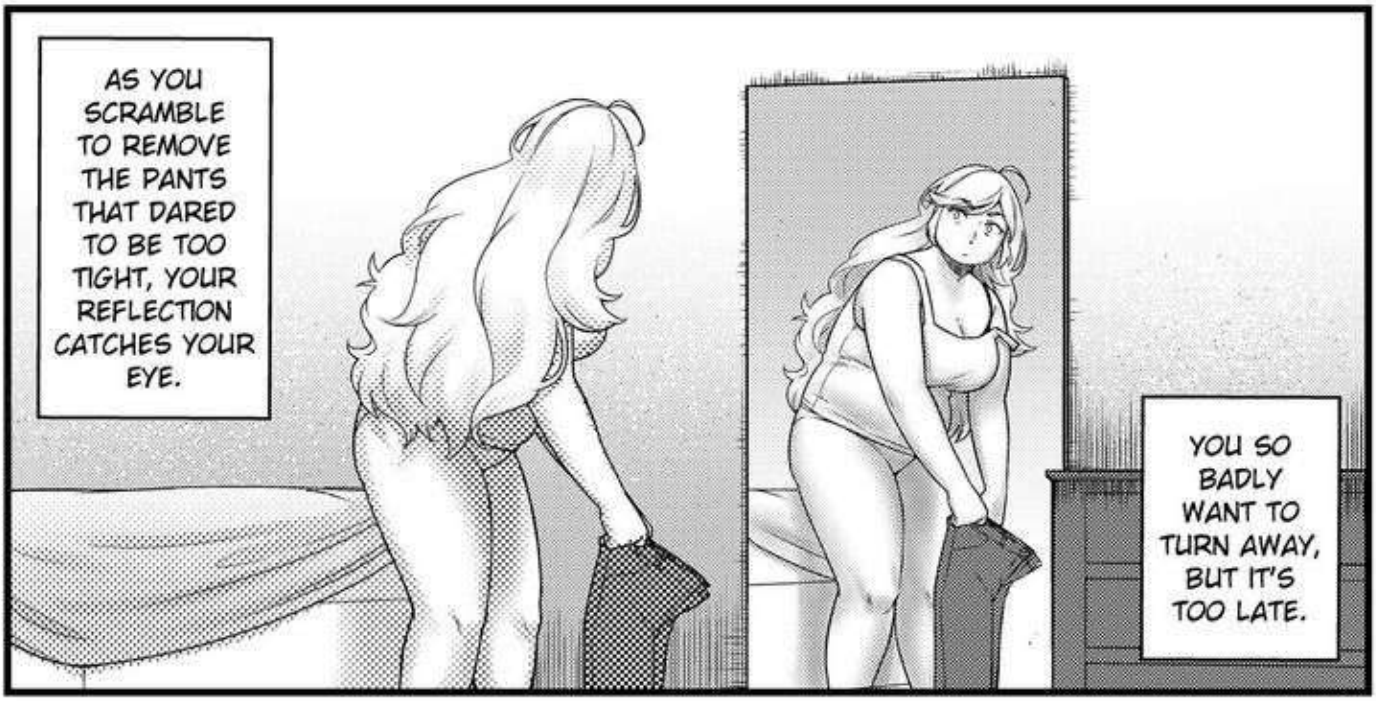
IT STARTS BELOW THE RADAR. THE PROCESS IS SLOW, NOTHING DRASTIC.
BY CONSTANTLY ADJUSTING, YOU DON'T REALLY NOTICE ANY CHANGE. BUT IT'S THERE.
YOUR SLIGHTLY ROUNDER CHEEKS
YOUR FULLER ARMS
AN ACQUAINTANCE YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IN A COUPLE OF MONTHS WOULD PROBABLY PICK UP ON IT AFTER A FEW MINUTES.
...
IT'S SUBTLE, BUT IT'S ALMOST AS IF YOU TAKE UP JUST A BIT MORE SPACE THAN YOU HAD BEFORE. IT JUST HASN'T BECOME OBVIOUS TO YOU YET.
IGNORANCE IS BLISS.

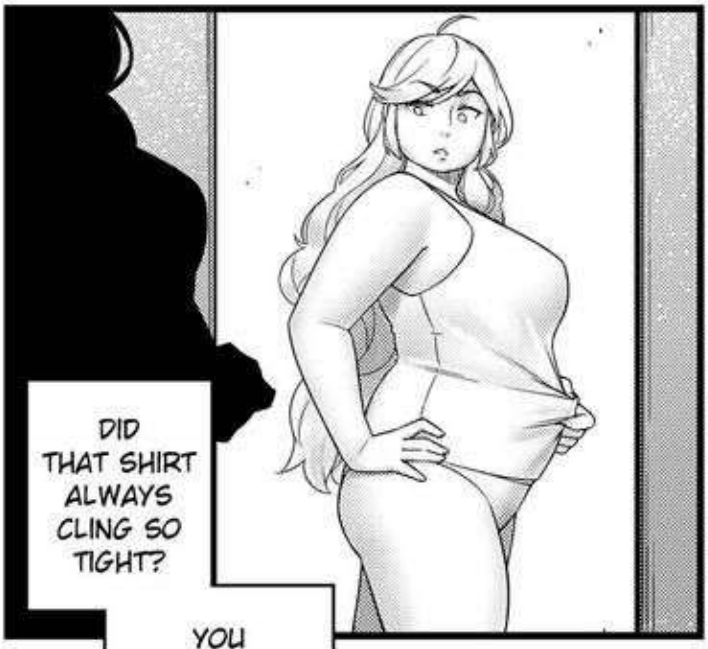

WHENEVER YOU GO OUT-
-OR ORDER A PIZZA-
-OR COOK SOMETHING FROZEN-
-THE MEALS STOP LASTING.
'LEFTOVERS ARE TOO ANNOYING TO DEAL WITH,' IS YOUR LAZY EXCUSE.
AND WITH THAT, ALL THAT FOOD YOU USED TO PACK UP ENDS UP PACKED INTO YOUR MOUTH.
YOU SLUMP DOWN IN YOUR CHAIR AND MUTTER-
OHHHH... I CAN'T BELIEVE I ATE ALL THAT...


OBVIOUSLY, YOU'RE EATING THROUGH YOUR PANTRY FASTER NOW.
AN EMPTY FRIDGE AND EMPTIER STOMACH FORCES YOU BACK TO THE STORE SOONER THAN PLANNED.
IRRITATION.
GURGLE...
HUNGER.


THOSE FEELINGS LEAVE YOU WANTING MORE.
COMBING THE AISLES WITH A CART LOADED WITH FROZEN FOODS AND VARIOUS SNACKS, YOU'RE NOT GIVING THOUGHT TO MEALS ANYMORE. JUST WHAT YOU WANT TO EAT.
THIS RECKLESSNESS SPEEDS UP THE PROCESS OTHERS HAVE BEEN WATCHING FOR WEEKS NOW.


IT'S UNDENIABLE NOW.
IT FINALLY BEGINS TO DAWN ON YOU DURING AN ATTEMPT TO BUTTON YOUR JEANS.
TUG
SQUEEEEZE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
THUMP
B-DUM
YOUR FIRST THOUGHTS ARE NAIVE ONES-
THESE SHOULD FIT... DID I ACCIDENTALLY PUT THEM IN THE DRYER?
BUT YOU ALREADY KNOW THAT JUST ISN'T TRUE.

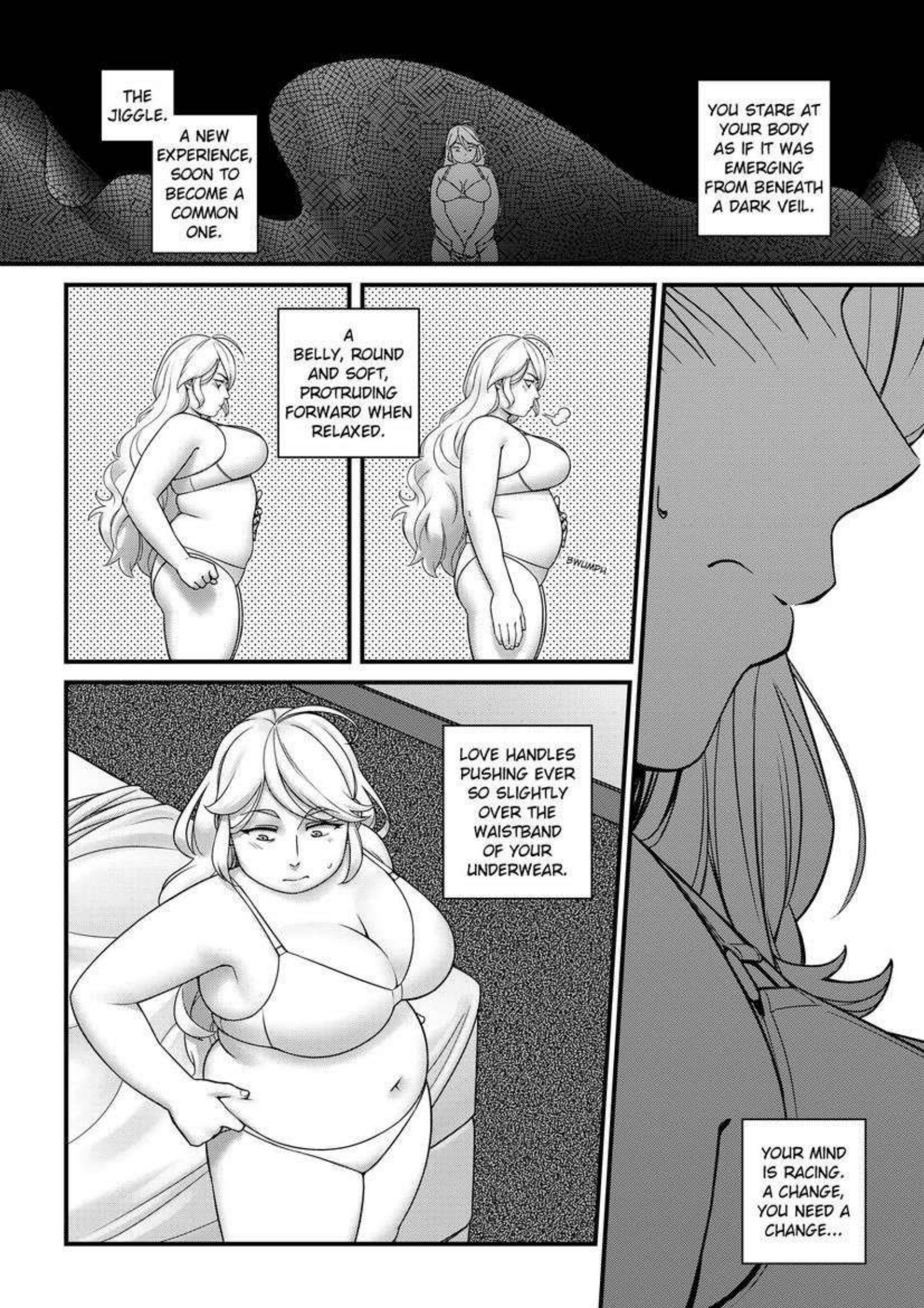

AS YOU SCRAMBLE TO REMOVE THE PANTS THAT DARED TO BE TOO TIGHT, YOUR REFLECTION CATCHES YOUR EYE.
YOU SO BADLY WANT TO TURN AWAY, BUT IT'S TOO LATE.

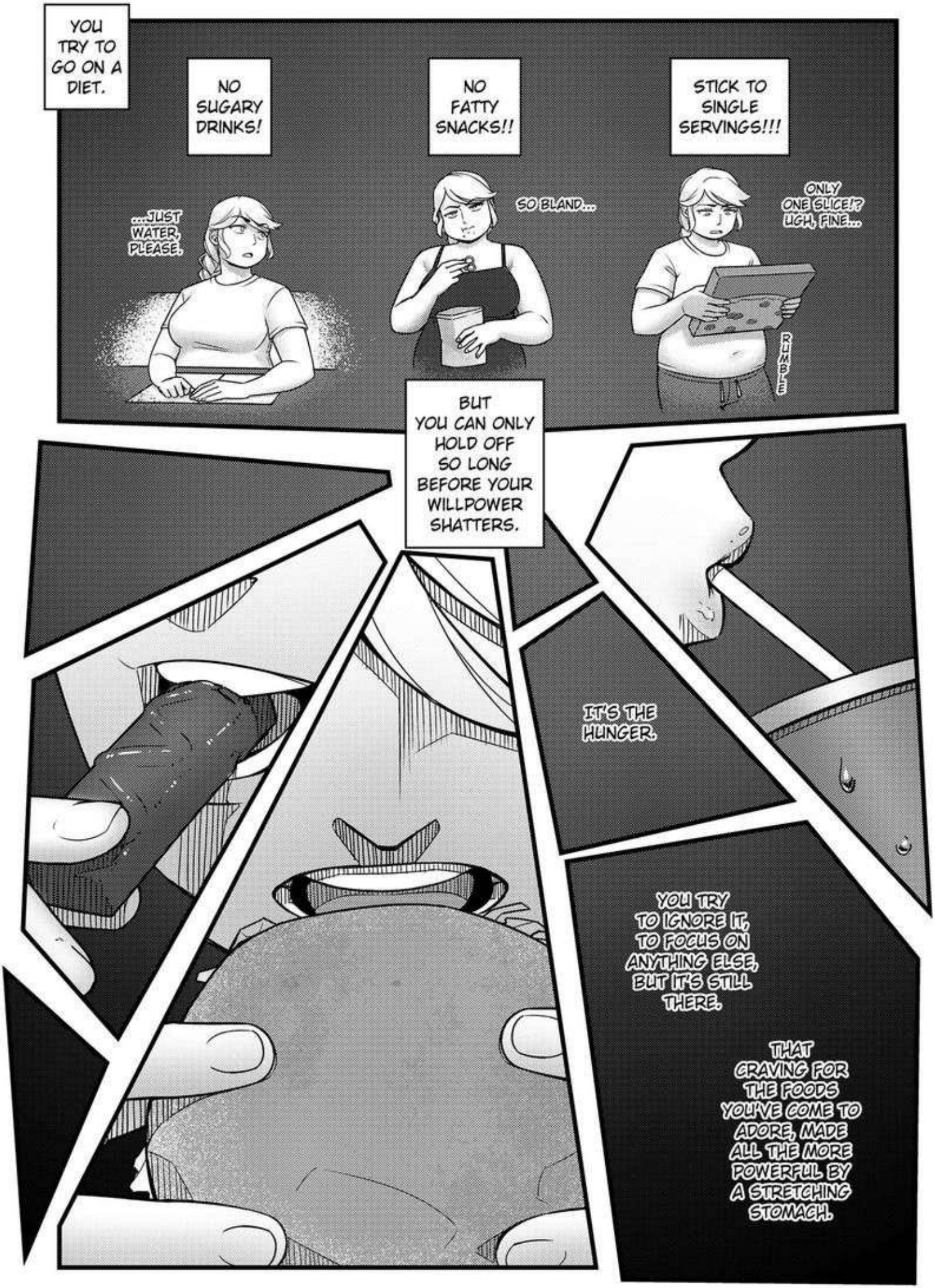

DID THAT SHIRT ALWAYS CLING SO TIGHT?

YOU DIDN'T NOTICE, EVEN JUST MOMENTS AGO, BUT LOOKING NOW...

YOU BEGIN TO TAKE OFF THE SHIRT, SCRAMBLING TO CHECK THE SIZE TAG, BUT AS YOU SHIFT YOUR WEIGHT YOU FINALLY FEEL IT-

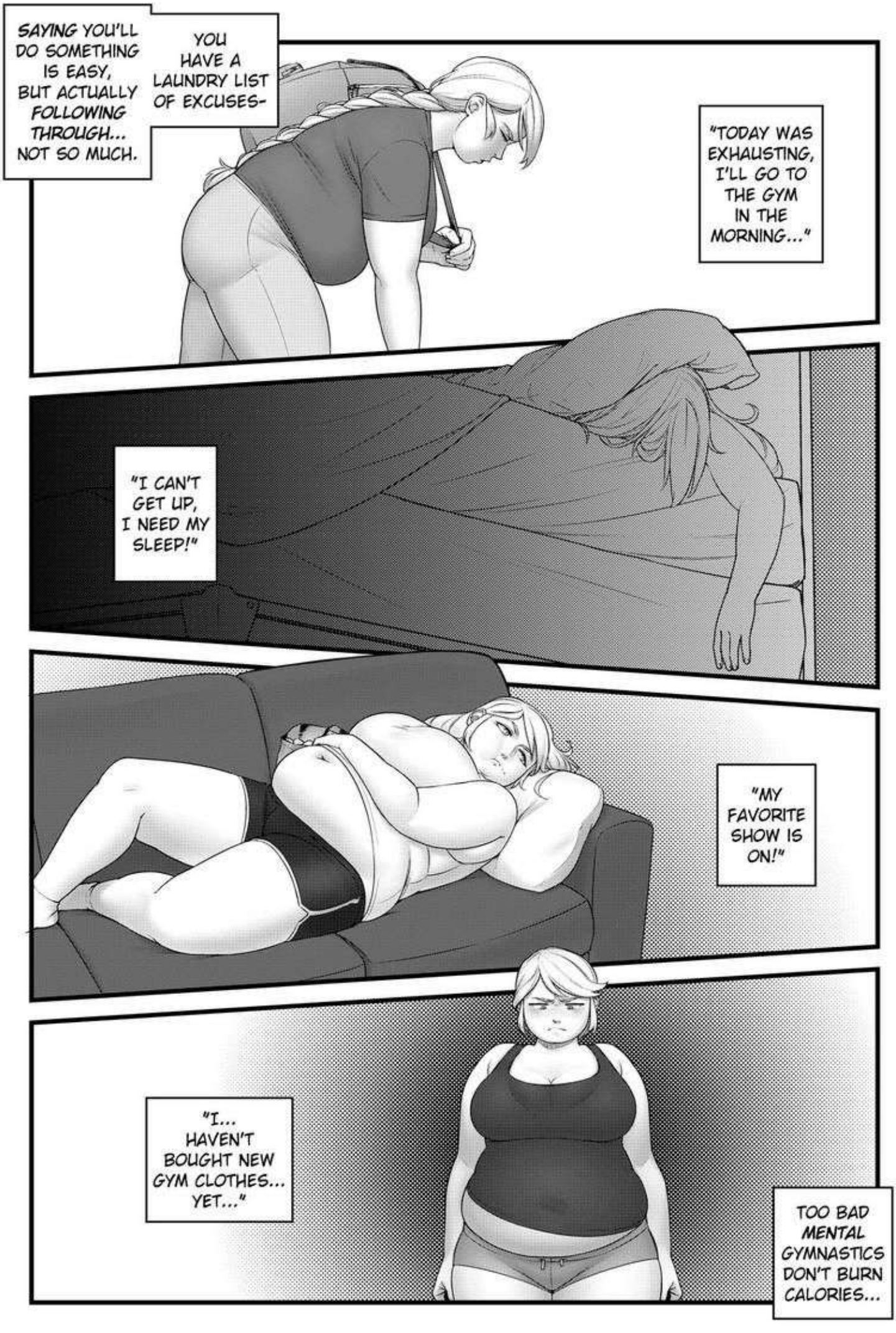
JIGGLE

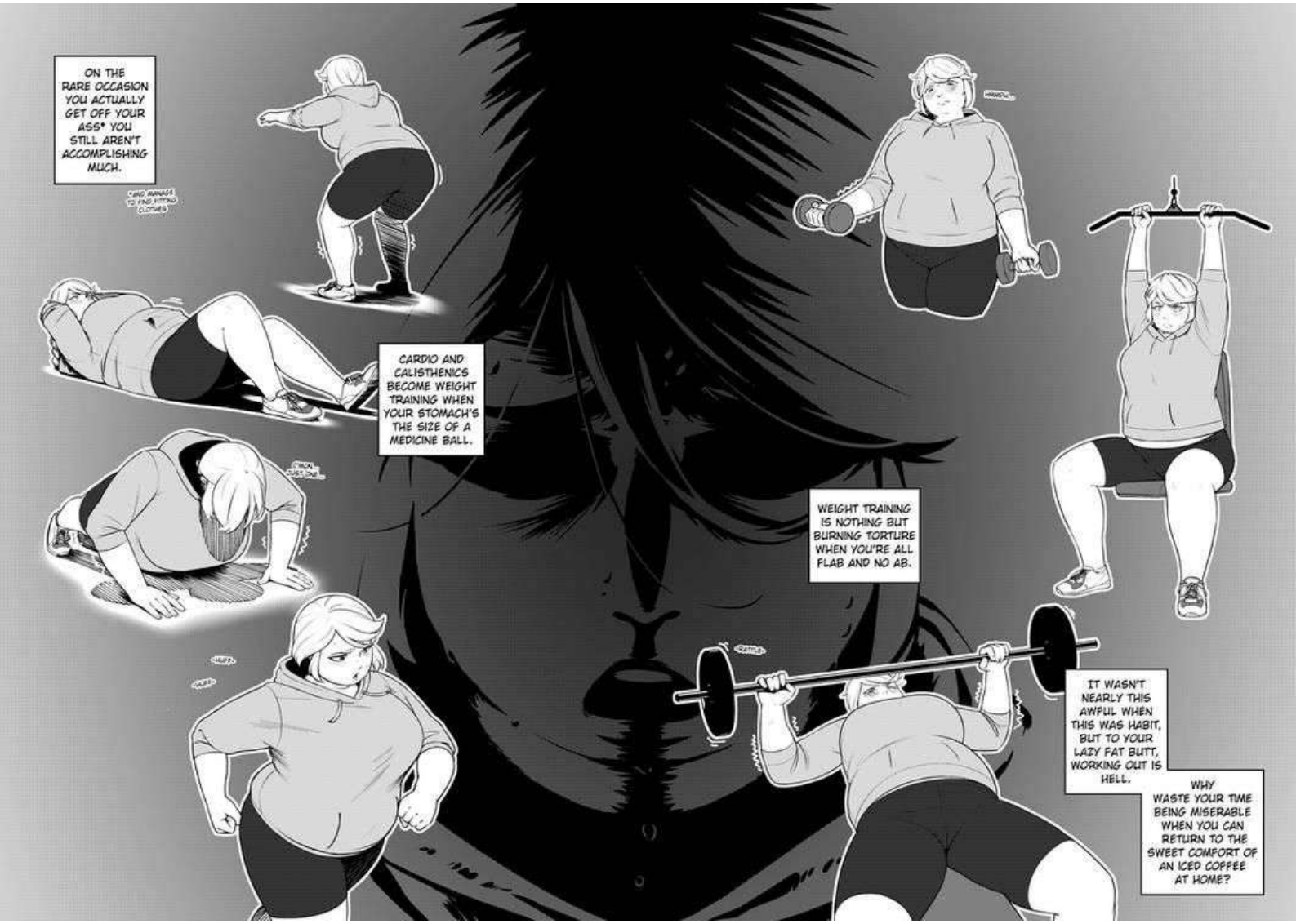

THE JIGGLE.
A NEW EXPERIENCE, SOON TO BECOME A COMMON ONE.
YOU STARE AT YOUR BODY AS IF IT WAS EMERGING FROM BENEATH A DARK VEIL.
A BELLY, ROUND AND SOFT, PROTRUDING FORWARD WHEN RELAXED.
BWUMPH
LOVE HANDLES PUSHING EVER SO SLIGHTLY OVER THE WAISTBAND OF YOUR UNDERWEAR.
YOUR MIND IS RACING. A CHANGE, YOU NEED A CHANGE...

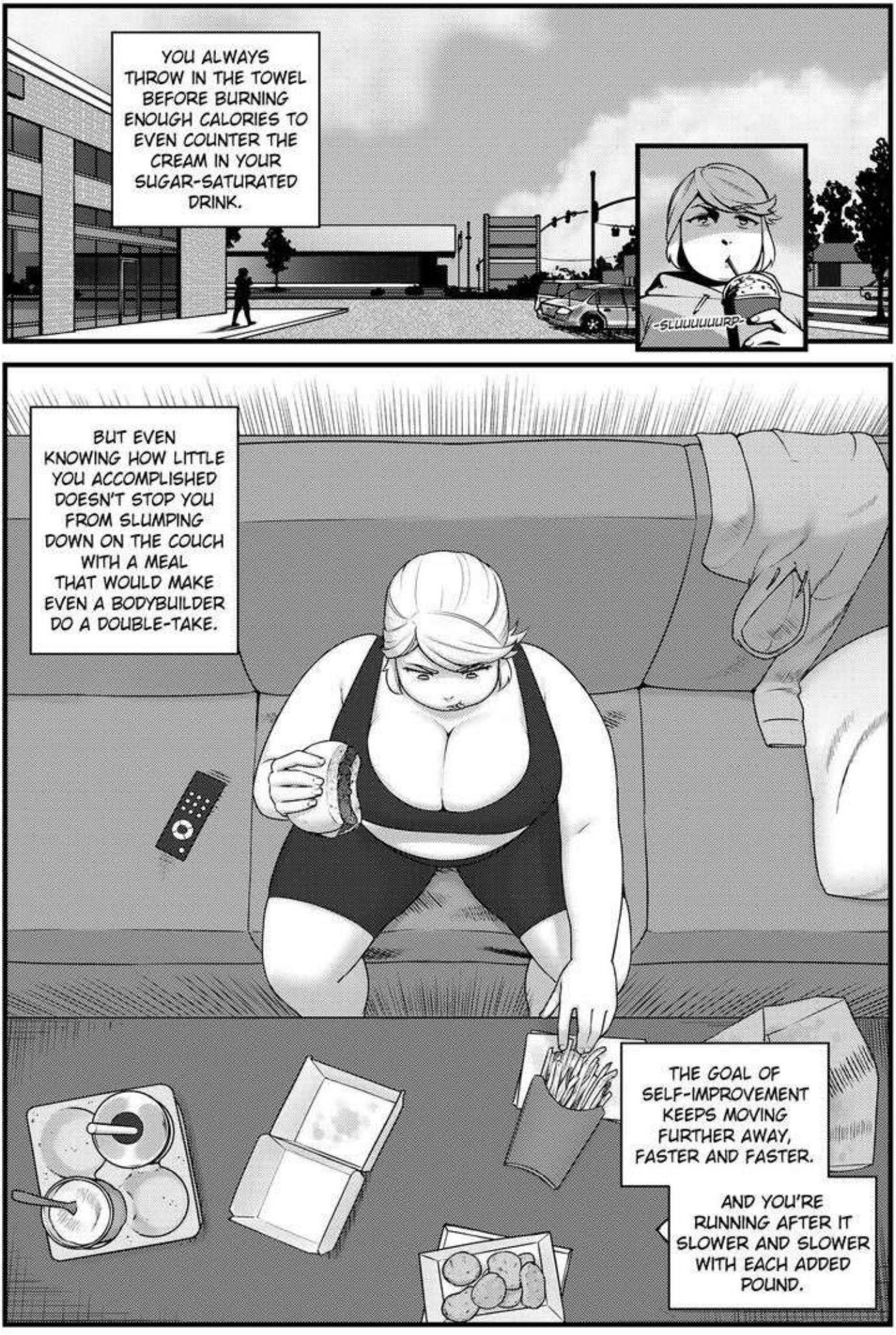

YOU TRY TO GO ON A DIET.
NO SUGARY DRINKS!
NO FATTY SNACKS!!
STICK TO SINGLE SERVINGS!!!
...JUST WATER, PLEASE.
SO BLAND...
ONLY ONE SLICE!? UGH, FINE...
RUMBLE
BUT YOU CAN ONLY HOLD OFF SO LONG BEFORE YOUR WILLPOWER SHATTERS.
IT'S THE HUNGER.
YOU TRY TO IGNORE IT, TO FOCUS ON ANYTHING ELSE, BUT IT'S STILL THERE.
THAT CRAVING FOR THE FOODS YOU'VE COME TO ADORE, MADE ALL THE MORE POWERFUL BY A STRETCHING STOMACH.

THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU FAIL COMPLETELY.
YOU MANAGE TO AVOID A BROWNIE HERE, A BOWL OF CHIPS THERE.
YOU EVEN PUSH YOURSELF TO BEGIN BUYING FRESH PRODUCE AGAIN.
UNFORTUNATELY, THIS JUST LEADS TO MORE FAILURE.
HEALTHY FOOD GETS BORING FAST, AND YOU START LOOKING UP RECIPES TO BRING BACK SOME FLAVOR.
BROCCOLI SLATHERED WITH CHEESE. LETTUCE SWIMMING IN DRESSING.
ANY HEALTH BENEFIT GETS SMOTHERED BY FAT, BUT YOU RECKLESSLY INDULGE BECAUSE HEY, YOU'RE EATING VEGETABLES!
YOUR CONCEPT OF 'HEALTHY' IS COMPLETELY WARPED.

THAT SNACK YOU CUT IS LIKE TAKING A PEBBLE OFF A MOUNTAIN.
YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY PROGRESS TOWARDS WEIGHT LOSS.
QUITE THE OPPOSITE.
IT'S TIME TO BE STERN WITH YOURSELF.
YOU'RE GOING TO THE GYM TOMORROW, FATASS...

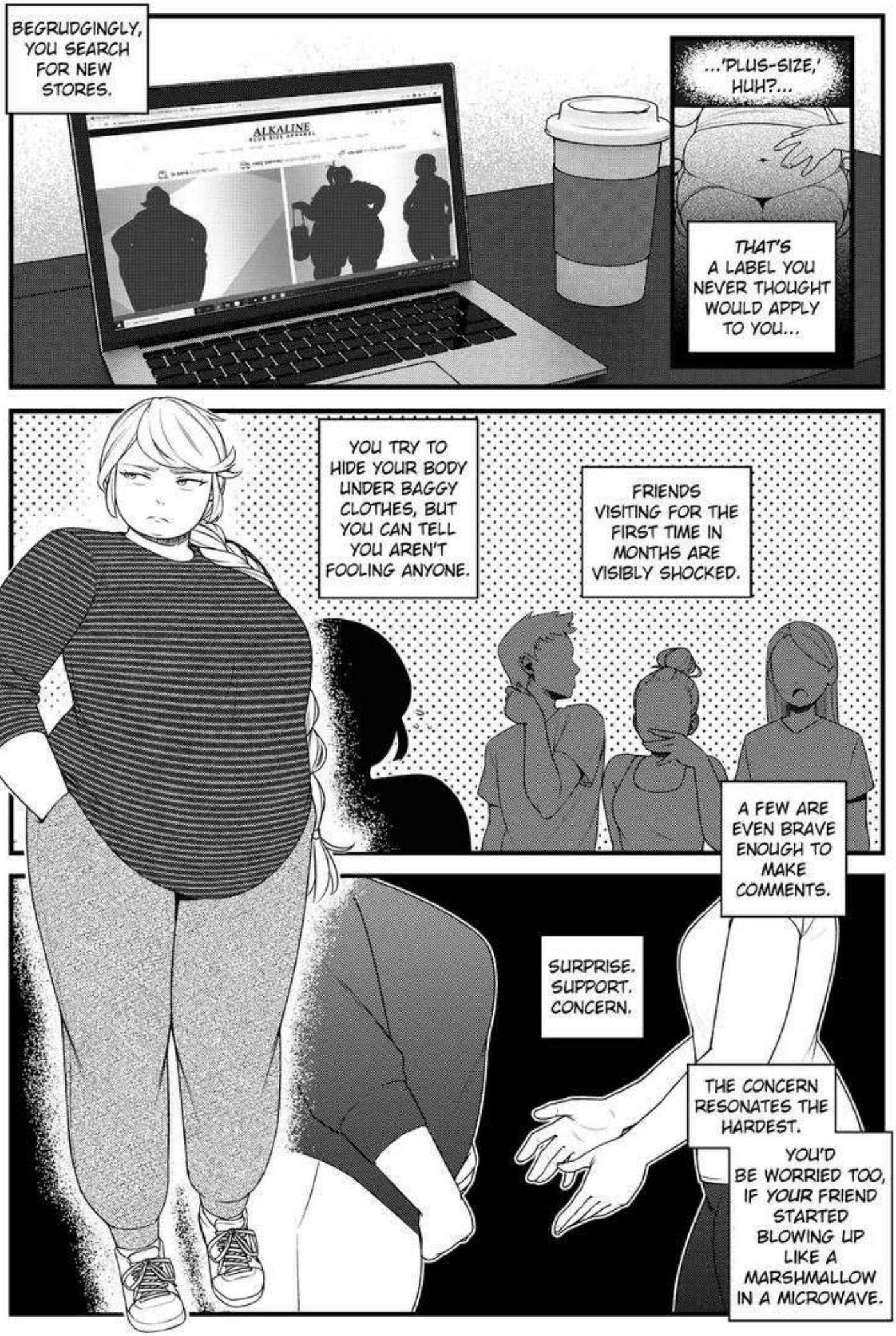

SAYING YOU'LL DO SOMETHING IS EASY, BUT ACTUALLY FOLLOWING THROUGH... NOT SO MUCH.
YOU HAVE A LAUNDRY LIST OF EXCUSES-
"TODAY WAS EXHAUSTING, I'LL GO TO THE GYM IN THE MORNING..."
"I CAN'T GET UP, I NEED MY SLEEP!"
"MY FAVORITE SHOW IS ON!"
"I... HAVEN'T BOUGHT NEW GYM CLOTHES... YET..."
TOO BAD MENTAL GYMNASTICS DON'T BURN CALORIES...


ON THE RARE OCCASION YOU ACTUALLY GET OFF YOUR ASS* YOU STILL AREN'T ACCOMPLISHING MUCH.
*AND MANAGE TO FIND FITTING CLOTHES
CARDIO AND CALISTHENICS BECOME WEIGHT TRAINING WHEN YOUR STOMACH'S THE SIZE OF A MEDICINE BALL.
WEIGHT TRAINING IS NOTHING BUT BURNING TORTURE WHEN YOU'RE ALL FLAB AND NO AB.
IT WASN'T NEARLY THIS AWFUL WHEN THIS WAS HABIT, BUT TO YOUR LAZY FAT BUTT, WORKING OUT IS HELL.
WHY WASTE YOUR TIME BEING MISERABLE WHEN YOU CAN RETURN TO THE SWEET COMFORT OF AN ICED COFFEE AT HOME?


YOU ALWAYS THROW IN THE TOWEL BEFORE BURNING ENOUGH CALORIES TO EVEN COUNTER THE CREAM IN YOUR SUGAR-SATURATED DRINK.
-SLUUUUUURP-
BUT EVEN KNOWING HOW LITTLE YOU ACCOMPLISHED DOESN'T STOP YOU FROM SLUMPING DOWN ON THE COUCH WITH A MEAL THAT WOULD MAKE EVEN A BODYBUILDER DO A DOUBLE-TAKE.
THE GOAL OF SELF-IMPROVEMENT KEEPS MOVING FURTHER AWAY, FASTER AND FASTER.
AND YOU'RE RUNNING AFTER IT SLOWER AND SLOWER WITH EACH ADDED POUND.

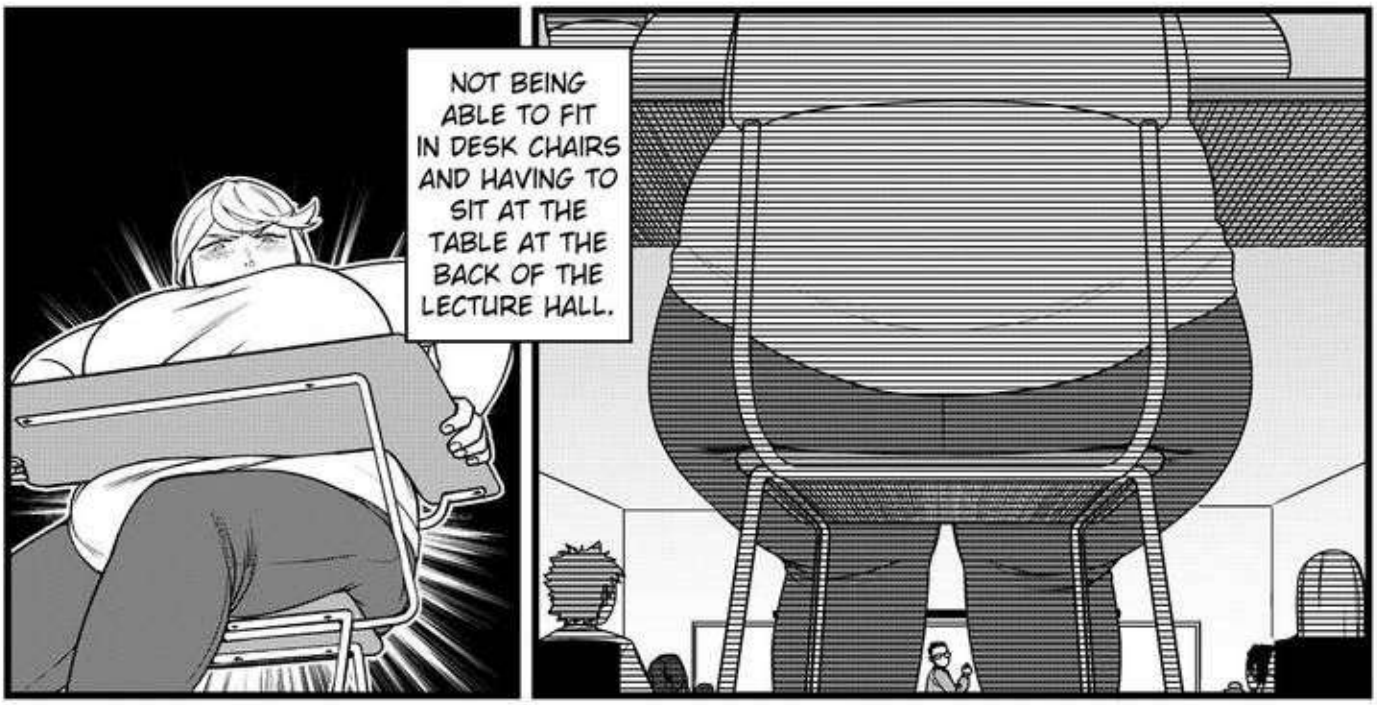
WHAT'S THE POINT OF TRYING IF YOU'RE JUST GOING TO END UP FAILING?
YOU CANCEL YOUR GYM MEMBERSHIP TO SAVE MONEY.
(EXTRA FUNDS GO INTO FOOD BUDGET)
YOU GIVE UP ON YOUR PUSH TO STOP EATING SWEETS.
...
YESTERDAY
YOU START GIVING YOURSELF CHEAT DAYS WHERE YOU EAT LIKE A PIG, BECAUSE 'I WAS REALLY GOOD YESTERDAY!'
THE EFFECTS ARE SWIFT.

YOU LAUNCH PAST THE SHALLOW INCLINE YOU'VE BEEN CLIMBING DURING YOUR 'DIET,' REACHING NEW HEIGHTS FASTER THAN EVER BEFORE.
OH GOD, IT HANGS...
IT'D BE EASIER TO IGNORE IF IT WEREN'T FOR HAVING TO BUY NEW CLOTHES.
THE NUMBERS ON THE TAGS ARE LIKE BENCHMARKS FOR YOUR JOURNEY.
YOU'VE GOTTA BE KIDDING, THESE ARE ALREADY A SIZE UP FROM LAST TIME!
YOU THINK THAT'S THE WORST OF IT, UNTIL YOU HEAR:
S-SORRY MISS, WE DON'T CARRY ANY LARGER SIZES...
...
THOSE WORDS CUT DEEPER THAN ANY TIGHT WAISTBAND INTO YOUR STOMACH...


BEGRUDGINGLY, YOU SEARCH FOR NEW STORES.
ALKALINE
...'PLUS-SIZE,' HUH?...
THAT'S A LABEL YOU NEVER THOUGHT WOULD APPLY TO YOU...
YOU TRY TO HIDE YOUR BODY UNDER BAGGY CLOTHES, BUT YOU CAN TELL YOU AREN'T FOOLING ANYONE.
FRIENDS VISITING FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS ARE VISIBLY SHOCKED.
A FEW ARE EVEN BRAVE ENOUGH TO MAKE COMMENTS.
SURPRISE. SUPPORT. CONCERN.
THE CONCERN RESONATES THE HARDEST.
YOU'D BE WORRIED TOO, IF *YOUR* FRIEND STARTED BLOWING UP LIKE A MARSHMALLOW IN A MICROWAVE.

'MARSHMALLOW' ACTUALLY DESCRIBES YOU WELL.
YOUR MUSCLES HAVE LONG GONE SOFT.
-SQUISH-
-WIFF-
-HUFF-
-PUFF-
NOW PEOPLE DON'T EVEN BELIEVE THAT YOU USED TO PLAY SPORTS.
AND WHEN YOU RUN INTO AN OLD TEAMMATE, THEY CLEARLY SEE WHY YOU STOPPED SHOWING UP TO PRACTICE.
OH YEAH, I... QUIT... JUST TOO BUSY WITH SCHOOL, YOU KNOW?

YOU CONSTANTLY FIND YOURSELF IN EMBARRASING SITUATIONS.



FEELING THE UNCOMFORTABLE STARES YOU GET FROM OTHERS WHEN YOU ORDER FOOD AT THE BAR.
...THAT COMES WITH FRIES, RIGHT?
...
OK, AND CAN I SUBSTITUTE THE SIDE SALAD FOR MAC & CHEESE?

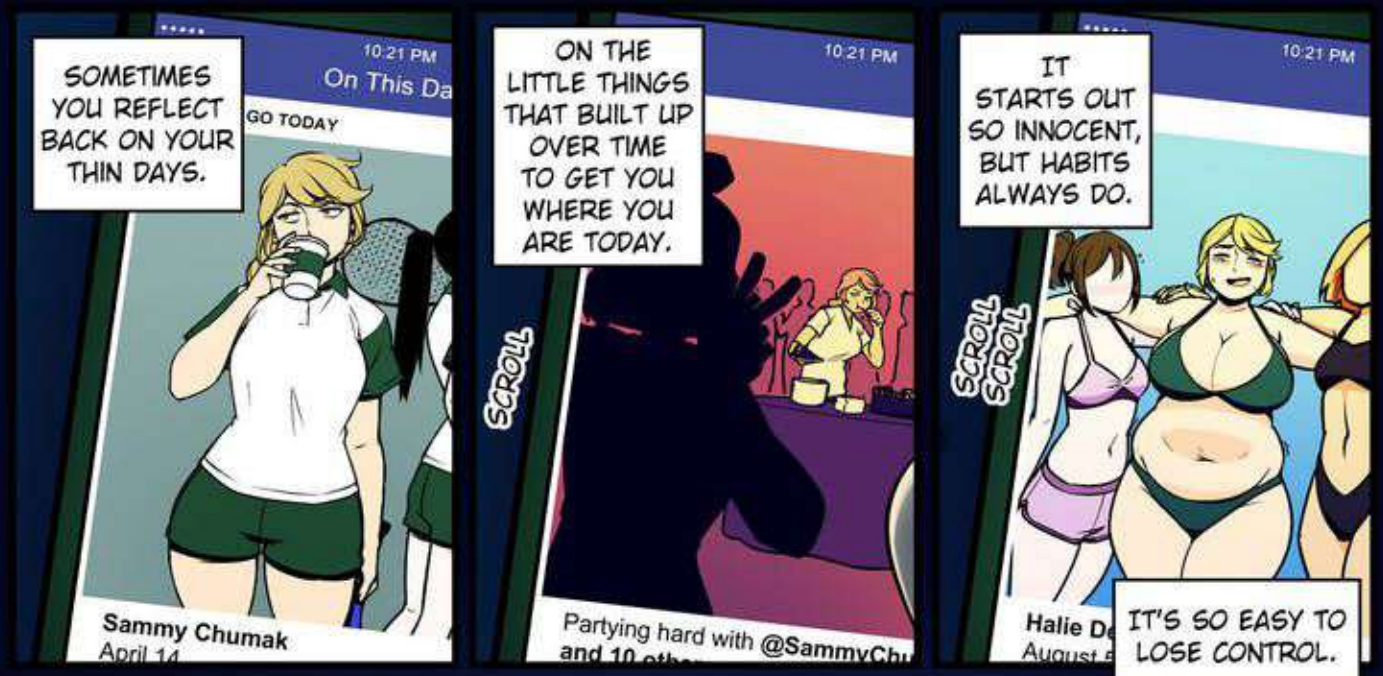
BUT IT STILL DOESN'T STOP YOU.

YOUR APPETITE'S STILL GROWING, AND YOUR PORTIONS TO MATCH.
FAST-FOOD? THEY SLOW TO A CRAWL FILLING YOUR MASSIVE ORDERS.
A LARGE* PIZZA? WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, IF YOU WERE HOSTING A PARTY.
*EXCUSE OF THE DAY: "I HAVE TO GET THE LARGE TO MEET THE MINIMUM DELIVERY CHARGE!"
FAMILY-SIZED SNACKS? THEY MIGHT LAST AN EPISODE OF A FAMILY SITCOM.

YOUR BODY IS CONSTANTLY EXPANDING, GROWING ROUNDER AND SOFTER WITH EACH PASSING DAY.
YOU HAVEN'T STEPPED ON A SCALE IN MONTHS, AND A PART OF YOU KNOWS IT WOULD PROBABLY ERROR OUT AT THIS POINT ANYWAY.
YOU'D BE FALLING DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE, IF YOUR ASS WASN'T TOO FAT TO FIT.
IT'S PATHETIC... RIGHT?

IF YOU'RE LIKE ME, IT FELT THAT WAY FOR A LONG TIME.
BUT IT'S BEEN SO LONG, YOU'VE STARTED TO WONDER WHY IT'S WORTH WORRYING ABOUT AT ALL.
WHEN YOU SIT BACK AND STOP OBSESSING OVER IT, THERE'S NO PRESSURE TO EXERCISE, NO BATTLING YOUR CRAVINGS...
YOU'RE HEAVIER, BUT IT STILL FEELS LIKE A WEIGHT HAS BEEN LIFTED OFF YOUR SHOULDERS.
WOW SAMMY, THAT DRESS LOOKS REALLY GOOD ON YOU!
THANKS! I SAW IT ON SALE AND THOUGHT 'WHY THE HELL NOT?'
YEAH YOU'RE A PIG, BUT SO WHAT?
FLOP
IS IT REALLY THAT PATHETIC IF YOU OWN IT?

MAYBE, SOMEDAY, YOU'LL FEEL DRIVEN TO GET BACK IN SHAPE.
AFTER ALL, BEING FAT ISN'T ALL SUNSHINE AND RAINBOWS.
BUT IT WON'T BE BECAUSE OF THE LOOKS YOU GET, OR THE SNICKERS YOU HEAR. IT'LL BE BECAUSE YOU WANT TO.
AND IF THE TIME NEVER COMES, HEY, THAT'S FINE TOO.
HEY, DIDN'T THAT GIRL USE TO BE ON THE TENNIS TEAM?
YEAH. DAMN, SHE REALLY BLEW UP.
YOU'RE JUST LIVING LIFE.
HONK
SNORT
...IN THE FAT LANE.


10:21 PM
On This Da
GO TODAY
SOMETIMES YOU REFLECT BACK ON YOUR THIN DAYS.
Sammy Chumak
April 14
10:21 PM
ON THE LITTLE THINGS THAT BUILT UP OVER TIME TO GET YOU WHERE YOU ARE TODAY.
SCROLL
Partying hard with @SammyChu
and 10 oth
10:21 PM
IT STARTS OUT SO INNOCENT, BUT HABITS ALWAYS DO.
SCROLL SCROLL
Halie De
August
IT'S SO EASY TO LOSE CONTROL.

BUT HEY, RESTRAINT IS OVERRATED.
THE END